



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

C1213 - Encountering Inner Demons Once More



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"This is..." Wu shi quickly turned to the island.

Despite being the vice head of the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, this was the first time he had seen the rumored Ghost Cavern.

It was a small island, roughly three kilometers in diameter. At the very center was a lake shaped like an eye, and it was impossible to see how deep it was just by looking at its surface. Bizarrely-shaped stones were scattered throughout the island.

Even though the island had surfaced from the marsh, it was as if some kind of mysterious power was shrouding it, preventing the slightest hint of mud from being visible on the ground. On the contrary, there was low-lying lush greenery to be seen all around.

The eerie voice sounded once more. "If you wish to kill me, come over! I'll be hiding somewhere within. You can slowly take your time to find me; I'm in no hurry at all..."

Following which, a layer of mist seemed to suddenly drift into existence around the island, gradually shrouding it from view. It was as if the island would sink back into the marsh very soon.

"Let's head over," Zhang Xuan said as he began to make his way over.

However, before he could get to the other island, Division Head Liao abruptly stepped in his path to halt him. "We can't go! It's obvious that the enemy has come prepared. We were nearly done in even before we could enter the Ghost Cavern. If we really enter the Ghost Cavern, there will surely be plenty of traps that will come our way!"

Even someone of Hall Master Xing's strength had nearly been eradicated by the lightning ordeal due to the other party's schemes. If they stepped onto the island, there was no doubt that they would face countless traps, and chances were that one of the traps would claim their lives.

Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "He already knows that we are going after him. If we don't head enter the Ghost Cavern now, he will only have more time to prepare, and that will put us in greater danger in the future!"

From the looks of it, it was apparent that Vicious had anticipated their arrival and made preparations beforehand. As such, there was no point delaying the matter any longer; it would not make a difference either way. In fact, the more time they wasted, the more time Vicious would have to kill more master teachers.

Since that was the case, it would be simpler if they barged in and got it over with.

Otherwise, once the Ghost Cavern descended into the marsh once more, they would not be able to do anything about Vicious anymore.

"But..."

Zhang Xuan was still shaking his head as he interjected, "If we do not enter the Ghost Cavern now, the enemy will just continue his attack. Rather than allow more innocent lives to be lost, we might as well head in to see what he's up to. Besides, if he really wanted to make a move against us, at least half of our group would have been dead by now!"

The enemy they were facing was Vicious, the legendary expert who had clashed directly with Kong shi back then! Furthermore, it was apparent that the memory of the Vicious in the Ghost Cavern had recovered to a greater degree compared to the Vicious in his Book of Heaven's Path. Even though Zhang Xuan was able to withstand the other Vicious' soul arts, it was hard to say the same about the three Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle elders from the Master Teacher Pavilion.

In fact, it was also doubtful whether Division Head Wei and Division Head Liao would be able to withstand Vicious' soul arts or not.

Vicious inviting them into his lair instead of assaulting them head-on meant that he had some schemes in mind, and as risky as it might have been, this could have been their

only opportunity to find out what Vicious was up to and bring him down!

Seeing Zhang Xuan insisting on the matter, Division Head Liao was a little conflicted. At this moment, he suddenly felt something hard in his hands. It was a wine gourd. At the same time, he heard a telepathic voice in his ears. "Give Hall Master Xing this wine."

"You want Hall Master Xing to drink wine?" Division Head Liao was taken aback.

Hall Master Xing had just been through the lightning ordeal, and there was not the slightest patch of un-charred skin on his body. In such circumstances, he should be fed with pills in order to hasten his recovery, and yet... wine?

Division Head Liao stared at the wine in his hands in a dilemma. At that moment, the feeble Wu shi suddenly walked over and bellowed deeply, "Hurry up and go!"

"Yes!" Hearing Wu shi agree with Zhang Xuan, Division Head Liao swiftly got to action. He pried open Hall Master Xing's mouth and poured the fine wine in.

A moment later, Hall Master Xing finally opened his eyes. Even though spirit had finally returned to his eyes, his movements were still dull with lethargy, similar to Wu shi.

"Since Principal Zhang has already said so, let's head in together. We have come as a group, so we should advance as one too," Hall Master Xing said.

With Division Head Wei's support, he struggled to his feet before wobbling his way over to Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan shot him a faint smile before leaping over to the other island, and the others quickly followed suit.

The little island was deathly silent, to the point where they could vaguely hear a deafening ring in their ears. It was as if there was some kind of formation that isolated them from the rest of the world. Wu shi and the others quickly scanned their surroundings as grimness seeped into their eyes.

"It seems like... a grade-8 formation!"

Even though the island was completely sealed, they found that they were unable to tell exactly what was wrong with it. Without a doubt, the formation cast over the island was one that was on par with those they had encountered back at the Qiu Wu Palace.

A Grade-8 formation... Even though two members of their groups had just achieved a breakthrough to the Leaving Aperture realm, they were still far from matching a formation of that caliber.

Zhang Xuan nodded as well.

While he did not think that it would be easy for Vicious to kill them, given that they were already standing in the other party's territory, it would be unwise for them to let their guard down.

Vicious was an existence who had trapped even Kong shi back in his prime, so the means he had up his sleeve were bound to be frightening.

Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and began assessing the island silently.

There was indeed a formation cast around the island, but it was not one intended for offense. Instead, its purpose was to float and conceal the island.

It seems like this land didn't float out of the marsh after all! Instead, it operates like a boat. Using the power of the formation, it floats above the marsh and roams around the area freely, appearing only before others when it wants to, Zhang Xuan thought.

Vicious needs to devour master teachers in order to regain his strength, so he intentionally spread the news regarding the abilities of the Ghost Cavern to draw cultivators and master teachers into the marshlands. Considering the treacherous terrain of the marshlands, the high death toll in the region has not drawn the suspicion of others, and all he had to do was let off a few cultivators from time to time in order to further the legend...

Slowly, a complete picture formed in Zhang Xuan's mind.

Previously, he had heard that the Ghost Cavern could temper one's mental resilience, and countless master teachers and cultivators came to the marshlands in the hope of a chance encounter with it. However, from the looks of it, it seemed like most of those who managed to find the Ghost Cavern end up becoming Vicious' nourishment.

On the other hand, the few successful cases who had their mental resilience significantly boosted would become living advertisements for the Ghost Cavern, drawing in a steady supply of cultivators and master teachers for him.

Birds die for food; humans die for wealth. Greed was an innate nature for all living beings, and master teachers were no exception to the rule.

As expected of an old monster who has lived for countless years, his means are far more formidable than that finger...

The finger Vicious that Zhang Xuan had subdued in the Cloudmist Ridge had subordinated the spirit beasts and saint beasts in the area to provide him with the nourishment required for his recovery. While he had managed to devour a substantial number of master teachers over the years, the numbers could not begin to compare with this one.

Let me see what is within the lake that has driven so many master teachers into a frenzy to find it... Zhang Xuan shook his head as he began making his way over to the lake.

“Zhang shi, be careful!” Seeing Zhang Xuan walk toward the lake, Zhang Jiuxiao hurried over to advise him. “The lake reflects a person’s inner desires and magnifies them. It’ll be difficult to escape from it once you are caught!”

He had cultivated here for a month, so he was extremely familiar with the nature of the lake.

It reflected one’s inner desires, and the longer one stared into, the more unbearable the desire became. Considering that their enemy they were dealing with was a soul oracle, if the other party used the opportunity to fuel those inner desires and warp them into inner demons, they could very well be done for!

Or perhaps, the other party might even have lured them onto this land with that very intention in mind!

“It’s fine. I’m interested to see what my inner desires will show,” Zhang Xuan replied with a casual smile.

He had also guessed as much.

However, if they hesitated in the face of all possible danger, they would never be able to get anything done.

“Zhang shi...”

Seeing that Zhang Xuan would not heed his advice, Zhang Jiuxiao hurriedly turned his gaze to Wu shi, intending to get the latter to talk Zhang Xuan out of his foolishness. But when he saw the latter crouching weakly with a pained expression on his face, the words he wanted to say suddenly caught in his mouth. It seemed like the injuries the latter had sustained from the Leaving Aperture Ordeal earlier were simply too severe, such that even speaking was difficult for him.

He then turned his attention to Hall Master Xing, only to see him in an equally bad state. His eyelids were drooping down, and it seemed like he would fall into a deep sleep if not for his sheer willpower pushing him on.

“Alright, you should all wait there for me. It’ll suffice for me to head there alone. If I face any danger, you can come and rescue me instantly,” Zhang Xuan instructed before walking over to the lake alone.

The water in the lake was incredibly clear, and the starlight reflecting off its surface seemed to be reflecting the thoughts within one’s mind. Looking deeper into it, Zhang Xuan could see faint images within it, as if recollections of his own memory.

Hu!

Soon after, his consciousness was drawn out of his body, and he suddenly found himself plunged into pure darkness.

It was similar to what he encountered during the Heart Ordeal back at the Qiu Wu Palace. A sealed room with no light and no sound, so stifling that it could drive one mad.

Some time later, a pitch-black figure slowly emerged from the darkness, speaking in a mesmerizing, familiar voice.

“Zhang Xuan, it’s me...”

The figure slowly approached, revealing an unbelievably beautiful face, one that belonged to the person of his dreams—Luo Ruoxin.

She looked over quietly with nothing but a faint smile on her face, a look that Zhang Xuan had imagined countless times.

Seeing Luo Ruoxin's face, Zhang Xuan could not help but nod in satisfaction. *Finally, something more creative than the others...*

The inner demons that he had met previously were all incredibly revolting, to the point that his stomach would churn just by looking at their exterior. At the very least, the inner demons here seemed to at least have some wits, knowing to morph themselves into Luo Ruoxin's appearance based on his memory.

It seems like Vicious has also played a part in this, eh? Zhang Xuan thought with an unreadable smile on his lips.

The lake could see through one's inner desires, allowing one to know that they craved for the most, and Zhang Xuan's greatest inner desire was... Luo Ruoxin.

But before he could even get to see his own inner desire reflected in the lake, an inner demon with Luo Ruoxin's form had already appeared before him. It was apparent that Vicious had meddled somehow.

If anyone else were to see the lover whom he had dreamed day and night for appearing before his eyes, he might very well have lost all self-control and immersed himself in the other party's comforting embrace. However, Zhang Xuan was different.

Putting aside that he possessed both the Library of Heaven's Path and the Eye of Insight, which allowed them to peer through the nature of things, just the four Celestial Master Teacher acknowledgements and the Saint Ascension Ordeal that he had undergone were more than enough to allow him to remain perfectly rational before such a situation.

"Zhang Xuan..." 'Luo Ruoxin' called as she slowly walked over to Zhang Xuan. The affection reflected in her black eyes felt so tender that one could just melt in it.

"You're here." Upon seeing Luo Ruoxin, Zhang Xuan muttered with a dazed look in his eyes. He quickly rushed forward to hold the other party's soft hands in his grasp.

"I have missed you," 'Luo Ruoxin' whispered as she gazed deeply into Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Zhang Xuan nodded before replying telepathically, "I miss you, too... Right, I have a 'Great Art of Inner Demons' with me here. Do you want to learn it?"

"Great Art of Inner Demons?" Luo Ruoxin frowned.

"Indeed. This secret art allows inner demons to strengthen their existence, allowing them to exist as a separate entity from their host. It's really powerful, so do you want to learn it?" Zhang Xuan continued saying telepathically.

"..." Luo Ruoxin.

"Don't worry! I have fused this cultivation technique together with the heritage of the soul oracles, spirit awakeners, and many other occupations. If you still don't believe me, why don't I recite a portion of the secret art to you so that you can make a judgement yourself?"

Grabbing the other party's hands so tightly that she was unable to struggle free, Zhang Xuan began reciting. "An inner demon, in essence, is a unique type of spirit whose existence is chained to the thoughts of a sentient being, similar to a separate persona of the individual. In crucial moments, it can arise and inflict a critical blow to the individual. However, along with the death of the individual, the inner demon will vanish from existence as well. Why should inner demons be damned to remain subordinates of other beings? Why can't inner demons struggle free from this cruel fate that the heavens have condemned them to?

"If those words have struck a chord in your heart, my Great Art of Inner Demons will be the perfect book for you!"

"This..." 'Luo Ruoxin's' eyes gradually glazed over as she listened to Zhang Xuan's words, and unknowingly, her hands began to tremble in agitation.

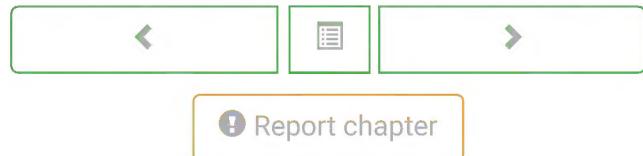
"How is it? Interested in learning it? If you want to learn it, acknowledge me as your teacher, and I'll impart it to you!" Zhang Xuan said.

'Luo Ruoxin' kneeled to the floor and cried, "Teacher!"

Pu!

Following 'Luo Ruoxin's' kneeling, Zhang Xuan seemed to vaguely hear the sound of someone spouting blood.

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